

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A conversion coating bath including a coating composition comprising:

- a. chromium (III) ions,
- b. cobalt (II) ions, and
- c. nitrate ions,

said composition including a ratio of nitrate ions to the combination of chromium (III) and cobalt (II) ions of less than 1.5:1, being substantially free of chromium (VI) ions and substantially free of ~~an~~ oxidizing agents other than nitrate ions.

2. (Original) The bath of claim 1 further comprising water.

3. (Original) The bath of claim 1 further comprising sulfate ions.

4. (Original) The bath of claim 1 further comprising a film polisher.

5. (Original) The bath of claim 4 wherein said film polisher comprises fluoride salts.

6. (Original) The bath of claim 1 having a pH between 1.5 and 3.0.

7. (Currently Amended) The conversion coating bath of claim 1 further comprising about:

- a. 0.020 to 0.075 mole/L chromium (III) ions,
- b. 0.010 to 0.035 mole/L cobalt (II) ions, and
- c. 0.010 to 0.045 mole/L nitrate ions.

8. (Currently Amended) A conversion coating bath composition comprising:

- a. 0.020 to 0.075 mole/L chromium (III) ions,
- b. 0.010 to 0.035 mole/L cobalt (II) ions,
- c. a film polisher agent, and
- d. about 0.010 to 0.045 mole/L nitrate ions,

said composition including a ratio of nitrate ions to the combination of chromium (III) and cobalt (II) ions of less than 1.5:1, being substantially free of chromium (VI) ions and substantially free of an oxidizing agents other than nitrate ions.

9. (Original) The composition of claim 8 wherein said film polishing agent comprises fluoride ions.

10. (Original) The composition of claim 8 having a pH between 1.5-3.0.

11. (Currently Amended) A concentrate for forming a conversion coating bath comprising:

- a. chromium (III),
- b. cobalt (II), and
- c. nitric acid,

and being substantially free of chromium (VI) ions and substantially free of an oxidizing agents other than nitric acid and including less than 1.5 to 1 nitric acid to chromium (III) plus cobalt (II).

12. (Currently Amended) A method for applying a conversion coating onto an article comprising the steps of:

- a. plating the article with zinc, and
- b. exposing the article to a conversion coating composition comprising water, chromium (III) ions, cobalt (II) ions, fluoride ions, and nitrate ions, said conversion coating being substantially free of chromium (VI) ions and substantially free of an oxidizing agents other than nitrate ion, and including a ratio of nitrate ions to chromium (III) and cobalt (II) ions of less than 1.5:1.

13.(Original) The method of claim 12 wherein the coating composition is at a temperature of about 20-40°C.

14.(Original) The method of claim 12 wherein step b is performed for about 25-75 seconds.

15.(Currently Amended) The method of claim 12 wherein the conversion coating composition comprises:

- a. 0.020 to 0.075 mole/L chromium (III) ions,
- b. 0.010 to 0.035 mole/L cobalt (II) ions, and
- c. 0.010 to 0.045 mole/L nitrate ions.

16.(Currently Amended) A method for applying a colored conversion coating onto an article comprising the steps of:

- a. plating the article with zinc,
- b. exposing the article to a conversion coating composition comprising water, chromium (III) ions, cobalt (II) ions, fluoride ions, and nitrate ions, said conversion coating being substantially free of chromium (VI) ions and substantially free of an oxidizing agents other than nitrate ions,
- c. rinsing the article,
- d. exposing the article to a dye solution, and
- e. rinsing the article.

17.(Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the coating composition is at a temperature of about 20-40°C.

18.(Currently Amended) The method of claim 16 wherein the step b of exposing the article to a conversion coating composition is performed for about 25-75 seconds.

19.(Currently Amended) The method of claim 16 wherein the step c of rinsing the article after exposing the article to the conversion coating is performed in water having a temperature between about 20-40°C.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16 wherein the step of exposing the article to a dye solution is performed for about 5-40 seconds.

21. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the dye solution is at a temperature of about 20-40°C.

22. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the dye solution has a pH between about 9-12.

23. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the dye solution includes a Mordant diazo dye and borate ions.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16 wherein the water of the step 3 of rinsing the article after exposing the article to the conversion coating composition is at a temperature between about 20-60°C.